



## Health Care for All – California

SINGLE-PAYER UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

Los Angeles Chapter [www.healthcareforall.org](http://www.healthcareforall.org)

April 12, 2016

Los Angeles Economic Development Committee  
c/o Office of the City Clerk  
200 N. Spring St., Room 470  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

*Attn: Adam Lid, Legislative Assistant*

Re: Council File 14-1371- Follow-up Policy Elements for a Citywide Minimum Wage

Honorable Council Members,

Health care for All - Los Angeles Chapter strongly supports a Los Angeles citywide paid sick days law. When workers are able to take the time they need to recover from illness or care for a sick family member, we can limit the spread of communicable diseases, improve workers' productivity, and boost our economy.

Health care for All - Los Angeles Chapter, an organization advocating for a just equitable, secure and sustainable health care system, partners with social justice organizations in working toward a healthy population secure in the right to be treated with dignity and fairness. Considerable research indicates that lack of paid sick days contributes to the spread of flu and other illnesses. Particularly for workers handling food or working with vulnerable populations, such as patients in healthcare settings, children, and the elderly, the dangers of working while ill extend well beyond the individual worker to whole communities. Moreover, research shows that when parents have access to paid sick days, they are more likely to ensure their children receive critical vaccinations, and children are more likely to recover quickly from illness when they are cared for by their parents. Workers with sick days are more likely to receive regular well-care, cancer screenings, and prenatal care.

On a personal level....as a former LA County Public Health Clinic RN and the current Director of Health Care for All- Los Angeles Chapter, I recognize the critical importance of paid sick time for the public health. As a nurse in a clinic serving low income clients, I often encountered people who waited until their illness advanced to a debilitating level before seeking care, because they were unable to face losing much needed income. For some this resulted in a longer recovery and even more days and income lost from work. Some workers feared the risk of losing their jobs due to extended absence...even if only recovering for a few days. It is not uncommon for folks to end up in the emergency room (costing more in health care resources than earlier intervention) because they delayed seeking treatment.

As a grandmother, I am frequently called to care for my grandchildren when they become ill because taking days off of work is a financial burden and has other workplace disadvantages for their parents. Children need their parents when they are at their most vulnerable. Importantly, the infectious viral and bacterial illnesses are more likely to be spread throughout a classroom when parents send sick children to school because they have no childcare options and cannot afford to take time off of work

As a daughter, I set aside time to take my 92 year old mother to her appointments and to urgent care or the emergency department. Moreover, during lengthy recoveries from surgeries, my siblings cannot

accommodate sharing these necessary duties. They cannot afford to take the time off without incurring loss of income. I am fortunate in that I can do this without that negative consequence, but it would be better for all of us if we could share the care taking. It strengthens family bonds and enhances communities when we can all share in the privilege of caring for one another. A better, healthier society results when we can nurture our loved ones.

Our working population deserves the security of knowing they can care for themselves and family members without incurring financial burden. All over Europe, countries protect their workers with this benefit, which is regarded as a human right. We can and should treat our populations with as much dignity and fairness as other countries manage to do.

Thanks to recent healthcare reforms, millions more Californians now have access to health insurance. But in order for Angelenos to reap the benefits of their new coverage, including access to the preventive care that will ultimately save our economy billions of dollars, they must have the time to visit their healthcare providers without fear of losing their jobs or their wages.

The nation's leading public health organization, the American Public Health Association (APHA), has voiced strong support for laws that guarantee workers access to paid sick time. In the absence of federal law, the APHA has urged states and localities to pass their own paid sick days laws, pointing to San Francisco's law as a model. While the state of California has recently passed its own law, the maximum of three days it guarantees workers lags behind what San Francisco guarantees its workers: up to nine days. We must ensure that workers in Los Angeles catch up to their counterparts in San Francisco, Emeryville, Oakland, and now in our neighboring city, Santa Monica.

The Los Angeles City Council has exercised impressive leadership in passing a \$15 minimum wage; this is an important step that will lift many families out of poverty. Yet, according to one study, one in seven low-wage workers – and one in five low-wage working mothers – has lost a job in the past four years because they were sick or need to care for a family member. If workers risk losing their jobs simply because their children have the flu or they must see a doctor, even a higher minimum wage will not be enough to ensure they can support their families.

We respectfully ask that the committee support a strong local paid sick days law without delay. It is essential for a healthy Los Angeles.

Sincerely & Be Well,  
Maureen Cruise RN, Director  
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